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'DESIRE NEVER STOPS INVESTING HISTORY'

MASHINES BIOPOLITIK POSTMODERNER KÖRPER, DELEUZE/GUATTARI, DESIRE, MACHINE, STRUCTURE

What is the relationship between machine and structure? What is it that differentiates a line of flight from becoming a pure line of death? Now, however unhelpful as it may seem, a perfectly adequate answer to these questions would be the difference between the nature of the possible and desire's orientation toward the virtual ('real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'). For just as there is more in the real than the possible, desire is something more than what is deemed (structurally) realistically possible. As we see with Guattari's own examples regarding the technological developments within the capitalist mode of production,

the spasmodic evolution of machinery keeps cutting across the existing hierarchy of skills. In this sense, the worker's alienation to the machine excludes him from any kind of structural equilibrium [...] Such professional bodies as still exist, like doctors, pharmacists, or lawyers, are simply survivals from the days of pre-capitalist production relations. (Guattari, 'Machine and Structure')

It is in this sense that a machine outstrips and modifies the structure in which it is embedded. Moreover, it is because of this relationship between structures which codify its machinic ruptures that Guattari locates desire on the side of the machine. That is to say, just as structure tends toward limiting the number of positions relative to the mode of production under capitalist society, desire tends toward its actualizing precisely in those locations within totality that have been deemed impossible, and toward what this structure cannot satisfy or incorporate. Thus we can say that 'machinic desire' is that which moves towards the impossible and is a process that attempts to resolve a certain social problem, and is actualized in response to everything that is felt to be intolerable within structures themselves. For what else does Deleuze mean when, reflecting on the events of 1968 in France, he remarks that May 68 was "a collective phenomenon in the form of: "Give me the possible, or else I'll suffocate." The possible does not pre-exist, it is created by the event. It is a matter of life. The event creates a new existence, it produces a new subjectivity (new relations with the body, with time, sexuality, the immediate surroundings, with culture, work)." What is more, and particularly in light of Guattari's particular understanding of how desire and its machines relate to their corresponding structures, we are able to return to one of the oft-cited from *Anti-Oedipus*, which claims that the German people were not duped into Nazism but authentically harbored the desire for it. For what is asserted here is not the non-being of ideology but rather the reality of an authentic desire for *death* (for it is precisely through this gradual modification of what is deemed acceptable and intolerable that

a people arrive at a position whose politics is nothing but a celebration of the 'cult of death'):

Given the right conditions, the masses express a revolutionary will. Their desires clear away all obstacles and open up new horizons [...] Desire [however] never stops investing history, even in its darkest periods. The German masses had come to desire Nazism. After Wilhelm Reich, we cannot avoid coming to grips with this fact. Under certain conditions, the desire of the masses can turn against their own interests. What are those conditions? That is the question. ('Deleuze and Guattari Fight Back...' *Desert Islands*, 217)

However, we still may ask as to why it is said that machines are defined by its disruptive break with structures. For Guattari, it is constitutive of the history of capitalism that capital revolutionizes its means of production – a point perhaps best exemplified by Marx's well known 'Fragment on Machines' and the tendency of automation in general. Machine in this sense is said to be disruptive because the structural modification, which is its effect, redefines which subject positions are viewed as acceptable and unacceptable relative to the mode of production. Thus, it is the progressive development of the forces of production that continually overtakes and displaces abstract labour's role within the structure of capital. However, and in contrast with the machine understood from the vantage point of the accumulation and reproduction of capital, Guattari proposes the following understanding of this concept of machine: "At a particular point in history desire becomes localized in the totality of structures; I suggest that for this we use the general term "machine" ('Machine and Structure,' 327). Machine in this sense is when any development within a structure simultaneously "represents social subjectivity for the structure." As Guattari writes, "it could be a new weapon, a new production technique, a new set of religious dogmas, or such major new discoveries as the Indies, relativity, or the moon. To cope with this, a structural anti-production develops until it reaches its own saturation point, while the revolutionary breakthrough also develops, in counterpoint to this" (Ibid). And it is precisely over this new element that machine and structure renew their mutual antagonism. And here, desire (revolutionary breakthrough) abides not by the logic of structural possibility but by the logic of the desirable and the intolerable:

The question we must ask is whether the things produced by desire – a dream, an act of love, a realized Utopia – will ever achieve the same value on the social plane as the things produced commercially, such as cars or cooking fat? The value of anything depends, of course, on a combination of labour-force and available technology (that is, variable and fixed capital), but also, and far more basically, on its relation to the dividing line between *what is accepted by desire and what is rejected*. All the capitalist cares about are the various desire and production machines that he can link up to his exploitation machine: your arms if you are a street-sweeper, your intelligence if you are an engineer, your looks if you are a cover-girl...Any voice that might be heard speaking up for other things can only interfere with the order of his production system. So, though desire machines proliferate among the industrial and social machines, they are always being closely watched, channeled, isolated from one another, put into compartments. What we have to find out is whether this alienating control, which is believed to be legitimate and indeed inherent in the social situation of human beings, can ever be overcome. ('Molecular Revolutions and Class Struggle' 255)

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